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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Thursday, October 3, 1935.

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Thank you Mr. Salisbury and Hello all you Farm and Home Hour folks. Do you know it is a great temptation for me to spend my time on the air today talking about the wonderful fall weather we are having and the beauty of the coloring foliage. We had a very light frost here around Washington the other morning, just enough to bring out the color of the foliage and it looks like we are going to have a wonderful fall season. My only suggestion to you folks is that you get out and enjoy the fall season. Perhaps that is carrying coals to Newcastle for some of you who are out in the fields every day and who may be just a little fed up on pastoral scenes, but for me, chained to a desk as I am a good part of the time, a chance to take to the hills and valleys at this time of the year is a real treat. I only wish that I might be back in my old boyhood haunts where I could gather chestnuts and hickorynuts for a couple of days.

On the other hand I am reminded that a lot of you folks are writing letters about this and that, letters that must be answered and bulletins mailed so that you may get the desired information. All summer long I have been getting oodles of letters about the possibility of growing horseradish and rhubarb, two of the minor vegetable crops, but to many of you these crops seem to hold out a promise of a profit in growing them. We do not have much in the way of printed matter on these crops but we have made up some little mimeograph circulars that we can simply fold in a letter and mail out as information. Considerable of the commercial crop of horseradish is grown in the neighborhood of St. Louis, Mo. but it is grown in Michigan, in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and other States. I don't want to discourage anyone but there is just about as much horseradish being produced at present as the markets will consume at a reasonable price. Once in a while, due to drought or some other cause, the crop is a partial failure and prices soar, then everybody gets excited about going into horseradish growing. Horseradish requires a very rich soil and a lot of labor so my suggestion is that you think twice or perhaps three times before you embark in horseradish growing.

Rhubarb is a northern crop, at least it is at its best in the colder sections of the country and I believe every home garden throughout the region where it can be grown should have a few hills of rhubarb. The commercial opportunities for growing rhubarb, are in my judgment, much greater than those of horseradish and if I was in the market gardening business near a good market I would not hesitate to plant an acre or so of rhubarb. Rhubarb forcing has become quite a winter industry in Michigan, Massachusetts and one or two other States. Before the roots can be forced successfully they must be frozen. Either the roots are left in the field until they freeze before bringing them into the forcing house or cellar or

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they are brought in in the fall with chunks of soil around them and are placed in the forcing beds and soil filled around them, then the windows and doors and sometimes the roof, of the forcing house is left open and the roots allowed to freeze solid. After the roots become frozen they can then be gradually warmed up and will produce a large number of tender leafstalks.

There are two kinds or styles of forced rhubarb appearing on our markets in winter, the one grown in the dark which is very pale pink in color and having no green in the leaves, and the other which is forced in greenhouses and contains a deeper color in the stems and a leaf area perhaps as large or larger than a man's hand and of a decidedly green color.

I get frequent requests for information about growing rhubarb in the Southern States. By bringing the roots from the north and planting them on the north side of a tight board fence or a building you may be able to grow some pretty fair rhubarb for a year or two, especially if you keep the plants well watered, but as I said rhubarb seems to need to be frozen in order to produce properly and so you are limited in your chances of growing rhubarb. You can grow horseradish for home use if you will plant it in a cool, moist place.

Asparagus is another of our perennial vegetables that is in the limelight at present and we are getting a lot of inquiries about where and how asparagus can be grown. It happens that asparagus has a somewhat wider range of adaptability than either horseradish or rhubarb and about the only section of the United States where it does not do fairly well is in Florida and along the Gulf of Mexico, and I'm not so sure that the crop can not be successfully grown in that section if we just try a little harder. I consider asparagus the very finest and best of our early spring green vegetables. Some of you may place early cabbage ahead of asparagus from the standpoint of importance but asparagus comes earlier than cabbage and I vote for asparagus as first choice. We have a Farmers' Bulletin entitled "Permanent Fruit and Vegetable Gardens" which contains information on the three crops I have just mentioned and we will be glad to send you a copy of this bulletin so long as our present stock lasts. It is Farmers' Bulletin 1-2-4-2. (Repeat). The three crops I have mentioned, horseradish, rhubarb, and asparagus all require a deep, rich soil and may be planted either in the fall or the spring but spring planting is preferable. If we can be of any help to you in getting started with any of these special crops just let us hear from you; the latchstring is out.